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In early June 2019, the General Commission on Religion and Race published an article titled, “VBS is Not Immune to Racism.” The article focused on Vacation Bible School curriculum from Group Publishing called Roar! Life is Wild, God is Good.

The article stated, “individual and institutional biases, blind spots, and lack of intercultural competency” contributed to creating a curriculum that perpetuated racist ideas and sanitized slavery. The author was blunt and direct in their comments, ending the article with the phrase, “Roar! is, frankly, racist.”

The curriculum created a buzz in religious news cycles. News outlets such as Mother Jones, World Religion News, HuffPost, and several local newspapers throughout the country examined its problematic components and identified blind spots in the publishing process. Knowing several Oklahoma Conference churches had already purchased and advertised the curriculum, and realizing it was unlikely that any church would be able to purchase new curriculum at the last minute, I was curious to know how VBS leaders using Roar! would respond.

I decided to write an article for the Contact to explore not only how churches in Oklahoma were responding, but also how the GCORR article’s timing made it nearly impossible for any church, regardless of desire or ability, to change curriculum at the last minute.

With a coworker’s help, I identified churches of various sizes throughout the state that were using or had already used the Roar! curriculum and asked if they would be willing to talk about it. I recognized the challenges this kind of conversation might pose to church leaders, so I invited folks to contact me if they had any concerns having a conversation about a sensitive subject. Two weeks after the GCORR article was published, I reached out to five churches.

Nobody was willing to talk with me.

...
The Communications Ministry sent out a survey to clergy and Oklahoma Conference staff during the last week of August. The survey asked ministry leaders about perspectives and comfort levels relating to discussions about race. Out of 144 responses:

- 81.3 percent strongly agreed it’s important for ministry leaders to be able to discuss issues related to race;
- 95.1 percent said being able to discuss race is important in every ministry context;
- 72.9 percent disagreed (50.7 percent) or strongly disagreed (22.2 percent) that the Oklahoma Conference prepares ministry leaders to discuss race-related topics;
- 75.7 percent agreed (45.8 percent) or strongly agreed (29.9 percent) that they felt prepared to discuss topics related to race;
- 91 percent said the Oklahoma Conference can do more to prepare leaders to discuss race-related topics.

If the vast majority of respondents affirm that discussing race-related issues is important and that they feel prepared to do so, why were church leaders unwilling to answer questions about VBS curriculum? In other words, why was it so hard to talk about race?

It’s not a new question. Authors, scholars, artists and theologians have explored this question in much more depth than can be described here. In most cases, a common pattern emerges: white people, especially in America, feel uncomfortable talking about race, so they don’t, which leads to continued discomfort when the next race-related conversation comes along.

Rev. Dr. Joe Harris said discomfort from conversations about race can come from feelings of guilt, assumed accusation, or an uncertainty about how to respond.

“I think it’s difficult to talk about tough issues in the church; we want to talk about love,” Harris said. “We think we’re going back to a conversation we’ve already had, and why should we resurface it? But issues of racism are an ongoing conversation because the issue still affects too many people.”

Harris, who was named the first African American district superintendent in the Oklahoma Conference in 1989, believes Christ calls his followers to reconcile with each other in order to reflect the best the kingdom of God has to offer.

“Race is a skin-deep concept that becomes a touchy subject because people have so many differences and perspectives, according to Rev. Tae Won Son, pastor at Korean UMC in Tulsa. He believes racism is faceless but exists everywhere.

“Racism is not just hostility or inhospitality but also fear and nescience,” Son said. “We can’t talk about someone’s race without their social and cultural background. First generation immigrants have language barriers that cause racial misconceptions or prejudice. It’s important in every ministry context because we’re all involved, whether we like it or not.”

Rev. Jennifer Ahrens-Sims, who serves as an associate pastor at St. Stephen’s UMC in Norman, said people can be hesitant to talk about racism because they don’t want to critically examine their own stereotypes or biases.

“I think some people avoid talking about race and racism because they are afraid they will be labeled as a racist. On the contrary, discussions about race and racism should begin with people telling their own stories about encountering difference,” Ahrens-Sims said. “When we begin to tell our own stories, it is the beginning of opening our hearts and minds to consider why we think and feel the way we do. Even if someone does have prejudices, it does not mean they are racist. Telling our stories is the beginning of understanding where those prejudices come from.”

Another potential cause for discomfort is fear of the unknown, according to Rev. David Player, pastor at Guymon Victory Memorial UMC. Player, who came to the United States from South Africa, said he has had
people respond to discussions about race with volatility and slanderous comments.

“There’s a whole apprehension from some people because they’re not sure about what is different or foreign or perceived as threatening,” Player said. “Things have changed so rapidly that where we are now is so different from 10 or 15 years ago. There’s a grief or sense of loss that things now are different from what they were before.”

There’s at least one conversation related to race or diversity at Player’s church every week. In one recent conversation, he emphasized the need to offer more than friendliness to people from different cultures.

“Friendly is nice, but people are looking for friends, they’re looking for community, and we have to find that together,” Player said. “We speak different languages, and we come from different backgrounds, but we have to do this together. These are not race-focused discussions, but they’re about getting past skin color or culture or fear of the unknown and instead caring for each other.”

A heightened awareness of racial tensions in the United States has created plenty of fodder and frequent opportunities to start conversations related to race and racism, according to Rev. Valerie Steele, pastor at Highland Park UMC in Stillwater. She believes it is important for leaders in every ministry context to know how to effectively communicate about race-related issues.

“Most of us function in multi-cultural/multi-racial-ethnic settings in much of our everyday life except for in the church,” Steele said. “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it best, ‘eleven o’clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours.’ He said that in 1965. And, 54 years later not a whole lot has changed. Dr. King called it shameful. We still have much work to do.”

Rev. Twila Gibbens agrees that changing inequalities and addressing race takes intention and repeated effort.

“I want to know where racism is in me, in public life, in systems and be able to listen, or witness when I know of it,” Gibbens said. “The more we engage in conversations about race, the more we will be aware when our ministry context has neglected to consider a racial component.”

Rev. Brett Thomasson, who serves Pawhuska UMC, thinks pastors need to prepare themselves for race-related discussions.

“In Oklahoma, many of our everyday encounters with other people will cross some racial or ethnic lines,” Thomasson said. “Whether or not we meet people of different races in church, we meet them elsewhere and should think about the ways we show Christ in those encounters.”

There is speculation that the racial demographics of the United Methodist denomination make it ill equipped to connect with diverse communities. In 1998, the denomination reported 87 percent of its members were white. By 2008, that number had increased to 90 percent. UMNews reported the dismay expressed by Erin Hawkins, top executive at the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race in 2010: “How relevant is a 90 percent white denomination to a nation that’s rapidly becoming less white?” (From “Church lacks racial diversity, officials say,” published by UMNews on Sept. 20, 2010).

Years of efforts to engage in multiethnic ministry have not yet closed demographic gaps in the denomination. The General Commission on Finance and Administration’s 2017 Membership by Ethnicity and Gender report lists white membership at 89.683—or roughly 90—percent. The same report shows Oklahoma at 92 percent.

For Rev. Carlos Ramirez, the data demonstrates an urgent need for the Oklahoma Conference to address cross cultural competency among its leaders.

“I think conference districts should have strategic plans already, ASAP,” Ramirez said. “We’re already late in engaging these changing demographics. We can be right on time with this, if we start now. Right now.”

When appointed to the conference office, Ramirez promoted the use of demographic tools to help ministry leaders understand their community’s cultural contexts. He also led the cabinet in taking an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which identifies actual and perceived intercultural competence in a person or organization. As the pastor for Putnam City UMC in Oklahoma City, he’s helping the church engage in ministries that focus on the well-being of the community.

“Where diversity is booming, especially in metro areas, I think district mission strategy teams should have strategies by now because one way or another, this change is going to reach the churches,” Ramirez said. “Whether you live in Edmond or Norman, change is coming. While you have the power – the people power, the money power,
the resource power – you should get ready. Otherwise, it’s going to be too late. Millennials are the most diverse generation ever. If we’re aiming to reach them, we as a conference cannot be only white as we are right now.”

Chris Tiger, the director of New Faith Communities, said the IDI is a good awareness test and can help leaders prepare to have race-related discussions. Though he doesn’t think race-related issues need to be addressed in every ministry context, he does believe they need to be discussed in more contexts than those involving primarily racial or ethnic minorities. He said New Faith Communities takes multiethnic outreach seriously, and the ministry’s two most recent church planting efforts have been focused on multiethnic ministry.

“The thing that I became more aware of is just the blindness that we have in a majority race. You just don’t know what you don’t know,” Tiger said.

Rev. Thomas Hoffman said he started to be more forthright about race-related issues at Hope UMC in Tulsa because those conversations were critical to the church’s neighborhood outreach. He said two families have left the predominately white church because of their discomfort with the conversations, and other families have expressed discomfort as well.

“Many church members still wonder why persons of color do not come back when they visit us, or do not visit at all when we invite them,” Hoffman said. “I suggest that the greatest barrier may be us – not because we necessarily harbor a strong explicit racism, but rather because we’re unwilling to talk about race and about our own biases and assumptions that put up walls to keep others out.”

Rev. Dr. Elaine Robinson believes a lot of good-hearted people shut down conversations about race with the phrase, “I’m not a racist, I love everyone.”

She added that refusing to participate in conversations about individual attitudes and behaviors prevents people from seeing systemic aspects of racism.

“If you think that your ministry context will never encounter any kind of racial or ethnic person, then you are not outside the walls of your church,” Robinson said. “If you look at demographics of this country, you recognize that in the next 20 years the white population will no longer be the majority population in the country. You add to that the gospel imperative to go to all peoples, and we’re not equipped to do that. It’s as simple as that. We cannot stay in our enclaves anymore.”

Robinson co-pastors Village UMC in Oklahoma City with Jay Williams. Williams said he was taught from a young age to work the discomfort of conversations about race, but that desire must be shared by everyone in the conversation. He thinks there are congregations that aren’t yet ready to have those conversations.

“I’m an African American pastor at a predominately white church, so the conversation comes up literally every time I preach. Me being there is a conversation about race, if I’m honest,” Williams said. “I think so many people see multicultural ministry as a sub-sect of ministry when actually, if we are truly seeking to diversify our churches, and if we truly want to bring in brown and black people, we have to be having these conversations every day.”

One race-related conversation Williams has noticed is the seemingly limited opportunities for pastors of color in Oklahoma churches. The subject was broached during an April 2018 event organized by race-related conference committees and featuring Bishop James Nunn, who listened to dozens of questions and concerns voiced by attendees of diverse race and ethnicities. Days later, the bishop announced Rev. Victor McCullough, who had served Quayle UMC for 10 years, would be the next Heartland District Superintendent.

“It’s concerning that we don’t have African American or Latino pastors at many large congregations, and what’s that doing for those other congregations? They’re missing out on a whole level of culture that’s beneficial,” Williams said. “I’m concerned about that, especially being a young person of color in the conference. Churches like Quayle UMC are great, but I don’t like that we’re limited in a way that our white siblings aren’t.”

Conference leaders like Rev. Derrek Belase, the director of connectional ministry, recognize the need for church leaders and laity alike to be able to engage multiethnic communities. He said many churches he’s worked with have demographics that don’t reflect the diversity in their communities.

“If we go to the local school or go to a basketball game or a theatre presentation, we realize our communities have a tremendous amount of diversity that we just can’t see when we’re inside our churches,” Belase said. “For a church to say, ‘I don’t need to talk about issues of race or ethnicity,’ actually says just the opposite. We do need to talk about it because race is present in all of our communities across our state.”

Belase said the ways the Oklahoma Conference has engaged in race-related discussions has ebbed and flowed over the years. He said he is excited for the work he sees taking place among pastors and lay leaders working to address race-related issues.
For Harris, the ability to talk about race and racism translates to an ability to engage a variety of hard discussions, including human sexuality.

“I think for me the question is, how do we deal with controversy in the church, no matter what the subject is? That’s always difficult in a church that wants to love one another but wants to avoid tough subjects,” Harris said.

Harris, who chaired the legislative committee during this year’s Special Called Session of General Conference, believes the ability to have hard conversations with Christian love was what John Wesley was describing with the phrase “holy conferencing.”

“These aren’t issues we can’t resolve, but it’s hard for me to be in a church that claims we love everybody and that we have a redemptive answer for everybody, but not be able to deal with hard subjects,” Harris said. “That doesn’t mean we have to convince everybody of the same thing, but we do have to be able to have the conversations, even if we don’t agree on the solutions.”

Even in the absence of ethnic or racial minorities, ministry leaders have to know how to engage in hard conversations, according to Rev. Travis Ewton. He believes the ability to engage cross-cultural boundaries is a gospel issue rooted in seeing the image of God in others.

“Even if your community is completely homogeneous when it comes to race, it is not monocultural,” Ewton said. “You cannot expect, especially today, that a 15-year-old and an 80-year-old come from the same culture, even if they have the same skin. They have vastly different experiences, vastly different influences, and vastly different access to the outside world. Learning to engage race helps us learn to engage other cultures.”

Many pastors believe the Oklahoma Conference can or should do more to prepare leaders to engage in cross-cultural conversations or ministry. Rev. Andre Contino believes connecting with others across cultural differences to show the love of God is central to the gospel and to the survival of the church. He emphasizes that conversations alone are not enough; they must be accompanied by meaningful action.

“It goes beyond race. Whenever you are in a minority group and people let you talk about it, what you see, what you experience, it’s not just enough to talk about it,” Contino said. “The truth is, after the discussions, the realities stay the same. Then it feels a little worse than before, because now people don’t have the excuse of not knowing.”

In the end, the data shows that Oklahoma’s ministry leaders feel prepared to engage conversations about race and recognize that Oklahoma ministry leaders need to improve how they engage race-related subjects at the church, district, and conference levels. However, experience demonstrates conversation alone is not enough. Until pastors and laity alike are ready to have discussions that go beyond the hypothetical – until people can talk about something simple like VBS curriculum – there will be little opportunity for the conference or denomination to meaningfully engage in ministries related to race. §
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“NO ONE GOES HUNGRY IN DEWEY”

One community's vision to end hunger with donations alone
What do you do when your church has extra space and your community has a need? If you’re Dewey United Methodist Church, you fill it with food and give it away.

Rev. Jinx Barber arrived in Dewey, Oklahoma in October 2017. He soon discovered Dewey was the kind of city that closed off downtown traffic to host a longhorn cattle parade, a signature event during Western Heritage Days. Dewey United Methodist Church made an equally strong impression on Barber, who quickly noticed the church’s enthusiasm for local mission work. When Barber downsized the church’s library, members of the church saw an opportunity to fill the empty bookshelves with a food pantry.

“Our church learned that there really weren’t any food pantries in Dewey that were facilitating distribution for the Dewey area,” said Jeanie Gilliland, who co-chairs the food pantry. “We’re just up from Bartlesville, so as a church, we got the idea that maybe we should have a food pantry.”

“This all started with a simple question of math,” Barber said. “There are 3,499 people in this town. Statistically, an average of 800 of those are food insecure. What if we could leverage the community and their community spirit so that no one ever goes to bed hungry in Dewey?”

“I was that hungry child”

Gilliland, who serves as president of the UMW at Dewey UMC, said she was one of the first to discuss the pantry with Barber.

“It was just something dear to me. Like I told Jinx, I was that hungry child,” Gilliland said. “We ate lunch at school, sometimes we went to bed with supper, sometimes we didn’t. When you experience that as a child, you think, here’s an opportunity, let’s do something.”
Barber harbored some personal hesitations about the logistics of starting a pantry. Experience had taught him the work would be more than the church’s staff could handle alone, and he didn’t know if there would be enough volunteers to do a traditional food pantry. He also wanted to ensure the church wouldn’t have to end one ministry to start another with the pantry.

“We decided to be intentional and take our time,” Barber said. “We didn’t want to rush. We didn’t want to start something that we would close in a year because we couldn’t commit to it. So we did what all good Methodists do: we formed a committee.”

“Everything starts with the idea of doing it”

Committee members began to research what it would take to start a food pantry in their church.

During the planning meetings, the committee decided against including the church’s name in the pantry’s name. They also decided to focus their reach to people with addresses in the city of Dewey.

“We’re the Bread of Life Food Pantry, and the vision is no one goes hungry in Dewey,” Gilliland said. “There are other pantries in Bartlesville, which is a bigger city, so our focus is on Dewey.”

After careful consideration, the committee also decided not to accept food from a community food bank because of the inflexibility it would create. Barber said the pantry still adheres to health department precautions.

“Government subsidized food pantries place limits on how often people can come and how much they can receive,” Barber said. “They also require a lot of paperwork and even possible building renovations. This would have increased the number of volunteers we needed beyond what I think we could support.”

The prospect of starting a food pantry based entirely on community donations didn’t deter Gilliland at all. She believed God would provide what the pantry needed.

“Everything starts with the idea of doing it, and if your heart is in the right place,” Gilliland said. “I was thinking, why? Why do we want to limit what we’re giving out? God will provide. What we need, what we give out, we’re feeding the community. The rest will be provided as we need to give.”

One of the committee members realized if they could get the Dewey Ministerial Association involved, the pantry could potentially outgrow the space Dewey UMC’s building had available. With the committee’s permission, Barber took the idea of the pantry to the association in the hopes of moving from a church–supported pantry to a community–supported pantry.

“None of us are looking for top bill on this”

In Dewey, the ministerial association is led by laity like Pam Cook. Cook is the secretary at the First Church of God in Dewey, where she has worked for three decades. She said she’s encouraged
that residents don’t need to answer an abundance of questions to get the food they need.

“It’s so hard for people to go and ask for assistance. I know there are those who are abusive of assistance, but there are so many people in need, and it’s hard for them to ask,” Cook said. “I’m encouraged that we’re able to just show that we have this, and we’re not going to ask you 10 million questions. We know you’re in need or you wouldn’t be asking for help.”

Like Gilliland, Cook has been in a position to need assistance with food.

“Unless you’ve been in that position, it’s hard to understand what that person is going through. It’s just hard,” Cook said. “You know you need help and that your family needs help, but it’s hard to ask for help, because when you ask, people are looking down on you, and that’s the worst thing we can do to anyone.”

Rev. Monte Brunner, pastor at the First Church of God, said his church supports a county-wide pantry in nearby Bartlesville, but limited access to transportation can make it hard for some Dewey residents to get there.

“Six miles is a long way when you don’t have a car,” Brunner said. “Sometimes the need for hunger is so prevalent that the ability to travel that six miles doesn’t fit into the time frame. We were looking for something a little quicker to access that could meet a need fairly promptly.”

Brunner promotes the pantry in his congregation, which he likens to a supporting role. Because the pantry is led by laity, his role is usually related to sharing information and acting as a cheerleader for the community supported ministry.

“I like the dynamic of what we’re doing here,” Brunner said. “I believe Jinx’s heart, too, that none of us are looking for top bill on this. We’re focused on the need in the community and making sure that need is met.”

“Let it grow and let it be”

The Bread of Life Food Pantry officially opened to the public in June. Barber said the community’s response to the pantry has been positive. The local grocery store gave them permission to set up a donation station, which Gilliland set up. Barber has also discussed creating bags for first responders to have on hand if they encounter persons in need, an idea appreciated by the local police chaplain and officers.

“As some committee members pointed out, there is more to ending hunger, so they want to go further,” Barber said.

Brunner believes the pantry’s donation-only setup will work out because the community takes such pride in the well-being of their city.

“I believe it is working, and I believe it will work, even if it’s not working to its full capacity yet,” Brunner said. “It’s a proud, close-knit community. I think when folks who are proud of their community realize there’s a need, they’ll step up and contribute to folks in need in their community.”
After the Dewey UMC library was downsized, there was a lot of empty shelf space available in the church. Members formed a committee in order to start a community food pantry. The Bread of Life Food Pantry now occupies space once used by the library. Photo by Jinx Barber. Logo by Jena Barber.
Gilliland said the pantry has not yet had problems getting food donated despite not utilizing a food bank, and she expects the donation station will help keep donations coming in. She said an average of two families utilize the pantry every week, a number she expects to grow as more residents learn about the pantry.

“For the people we’re serving right now, we have plenty. And as we grow, we’ll figure it out,” Gilliland said.

Though Cook doesn’t interact with the pantry on a daily basis, she is hopeful the pantry will have a positive effect on the community.

“It’s very new; really, it just began in the last few months,” Cook said. “I hope that it’s making a good impact, but you’ve got to get the word out for it before it really takes off.”

Gilliland said she has ideas for the future of the pantry. Both she and Cook hope the pantry will grow enough to support a refrigerator or freezer so they can offer fresh or frozen foods.

“I think that any church or anyone who starts a project like a food pantry just has to let it grow and let it be and see where it goes,” Gilliland said. “As with anything else, the more effort you put into it, the more you’ll receive. We’re going to put the effort into it for it to grow as the need develops.”

A donation station at the local grocery store offers shopping lists to those who would like to provide groceries for the food pantry. Shoppers drop off their donations, and a pantry volunteer takes the donated items to the pantry. Photo by Jeanie Gilliland.
A love letter to newsletters

By Meagan Ewton, Editor of Publications

I love church newsletters. I always have. That friendly little folded paper makes me feel valued and remembered by the church community, especially if I’ve been away from my home church for a while. It might be just a sheet or two of paper, but I can feel the heart of the church beating with every line.

Digital newsletters are no different. Even though I can’t hold it in my hand, I can see the church’s energy shining through every picture and prayer request. I may be just another address on the mailing list, but I always enjoy seeing what’s happening in the life of the church.

I’ve seen a lot of newsletters over the years, and while both print and digital versions have many similar components, I have never seen two that are exactly the same. They’re almost like fingerprints. Some are informal, some are tightly structured, but all are committed to connecting the members with the life of the church.

To be clear, churches that do not have a newsletter are not missing out on a critical component of church identity, nor are they in any way inferior to churches that have one. Each ministry context is different, and churches that have found other methods more effective are in no way inferior to churches that share newsletters.

This may be a love letter to newsletters, but there’s just as much love in this editor’s heart for sharing announcements on Sundays, sending out text messages, hosting a bulletin board, posting on social media, updating online calendars and exploring new ways to connect with the community. Each communication style is valid and just as much of a church’s identity as any newsletter could be.

As much as I love newsletters, I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge that there’s always room for improvement when it comes to design and structure. While every printed and digital newsletter has its own personality, there are some elements of design that can help both digital and printed newsletters stand out. Does that mean I think every church newsletter needs a redesign? Definitely not. But sometimes, a small adjustment can help a church’s personality shine all the brighter.

White space

White space, sometimes known as negative space, is a design term used to describe unused space on a page. Margins, room between pictures and space between paragraphs are all examples of white space.

White space is used to create a visual sense of balance, give emphasis to chosen elements and improve reading comprehension. Too little white space can make a newsletter look cluttered, while too much white space can make it hard to emphasize important information.

Adjust your newsletter’s white space by changing the margins, setting a consistent amount of space around photos, examining paragraph line spacing, or switching to a different font (more on this below).

An example of layout for a printed newsletter. In the second section, lines in each column are used to represent how space between lines in a paragraph can affect the appearance of white space on the page as a whole.

UNDERSTANDING THE LAYOUT

Thick lines: Headings or emphasized text
Thin lines: Story text
Gray squares: Spaces for images
**Photo resolution**

Photos are an important staple of every newsletter. The easiest way to get the best out of your photos is to make sure they’re the correct resolution for your newsletter’s medium.

Resolution does not refer to an image’s quality; it refers to the number of pixels per square inch (ppi) a photo contains. Use a high resolution (300 ppi) for printed newsletters and a low resolution (72 ppi) for digital newsletters.

You can change a photo’s resolution without changing the photo’s size in most photo editors by making sure the option labeled “Resample image” is not selected.

**Fonts**

Sometimes all it takes to spruce up a design is choosing a new font. There are two basic kinds of fonts: serif and sans serif. Serifs are little lines and strokes on letters that give them a particular shape. Sans serif fonts do not have these lines and strokes. Each font style has its merits, and both can be used together to create contrast and emphasis, such as in this magazine’s logo.

Font choice can affect white space and readability. Too much thick or bold text can make text difficult to read, and too much thin or italic text can make important information go unnoticed. Using just one or two fonts in a limited amount of sizes and styles will keep text looking clean and easy to read.

There is no “right” choice when it comes to font, but using too many fonts at once can create a disjointed reading experience. That doesn’t mean a newsletter has to be limited in the kinds of fonts it uses; rather, it means that all fonts should be chosen with readability in mind.

**Layout**

Layout refers to the way images, shapes and text are placed on the page. Some people feel more comfortable using a template for their newsletter, while others prefer to manually add text boxes and images. Both options can result in great newsletters.

In general, digital newsletters are taller and printed newsletters are wider. What works in print may look crowded in a digital format, and what works in digital may appear lackluster when in print. For example, having three columns in print can be a great way to make stories easy to read, but doing the same in a digital email can make information look crowded.

In the end, the layout that works best is the one that keeps your church informed. Don’t be afraid to experiment, and most of all, have fun telling your church’s story! I know I’ll enjoy reading it.

**Share your ministry’s newsletter with us!**

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**Print newsletters**

OKUMC Communications Ministry
1501 N.W. 24th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73106

**Email newsletters**

editor@okumc.org

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*An example of layout for a digital newsletter. Sections are separated by emphasized text, horizontal lines and photo size. Another great way to separate sections is by using background colors.*

UNDERSTANDING THE LAYOUT

* Thick lines: Headings or emphasized text
* Thin lines: Story text
* Gray squares: Spaces for images
* Gray circles: Social media icons
Whether print or digital, we enjoy seeing all the news local churches have to share.

See our love letter to newsletters on page 16.